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ABSTRACT

This paper examines teen births during the period from 1991 to 1996, a period chosen because teen births started to decline in 1991 and 1996 was the most recent data year available. In most cities, the number of births to teens decreased in this period, but in a small number of cities, the number of births to teenagers increased. It is not clear whether increases in the number of births reflect an increase in the rate at which teens are having babies or an increase in the number of teens. When one looks at the birth rate for teens, the figures vary widely. Several cities with relatively low teen birth rates are cities with relatively large Asian American populations; several cities with relatively high teen birthrates are cities with relatively large Hispanic populations. However, this is not always the case. In many ways, the racial composition of a city seems to be related to the teen birth rate in ways that make sense given the nationwide shifts between 1991 and 1996. Overall, the data show that the big cities have been leading the national reduction in teenage childbearing. (SLD)

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ED 445 174

TEEN CHILDBEARING

IN

AMERICA'S LARGEST CITIES

By William P. O'Hare, Ph.D.

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A KIDS COUNT Working Paper

April 1999

The Annie E. Casey Foundation
Baltimore, Maryland

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TEEN CHILDBEARING IN AMERICA'S LARGEST CITIES

INTRODUCTION

On January 20, 1999, the Annie E. Casey Foundation released a KIDS COUNT Special Report entitled, When Teens Have Sex: Issues and Trends, which focused on recent changes in teen birth rates and provided data on other reproductive health-related issues such as sexual activity, health insurance, and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs).[1] The publication provided national data as well as comparable data for each state and the District of Columbia.

This Working Paper is intended to supplement When Teens Have Sex by addressing recent changes in teen childbearing (for females ages 15-19) in the nation's 50 largest cities.[2] More than one-fifth of all teen births in the United States occur in one of these 50 cities. Like the KIDS COUNT Special Report released in January, this paper examines teen births during the 1991 to 1996 period. This period was chosen because the national teen birth rate started to decline in 1991, and 1996 is the most recent data available.

Although much has been written recently about changes in teen childbearing patterns,[3] relatively little empirical information has been focused on trends in large U.S. cities. While the recent national decline in teen pregnancy, childbearing, and abortion is clearly good news, it is important to see if large cities are also experiencing these positive trends.

For many readers, our report will raise more questions than it answers. We are quick to

acknowledge that we have not vigorously pursued some key questions. For example, this report will not convey important contextual information about local programs and community commitments aimed at improving outcomes for young people. Nor will it attempt to describe the policy environment for adolescent reproductive health in the cities. Although this information would be useful in gaining a fuller understanding of differences among cities, the time and effort it would take to gather and analyze such data are beyond the scope of this report.

We hope this description of recent trends will stimulate further discussion among our colleagues. This Working Paper is an open invitation for researchers, advocates, policymakers, program operators, and journalists to investigate these trends within the context of what is being done by families, policymakers, and community institutions such as schools and churches to reduce teen childbearing in the nation's largest cities.

FINDINGS

First, we show changes between 1991 and 1996 in the number of births to teens. Second, we examine variations in the rate of adolescent fertility across cities in 1996 based on the teen birth rate (the number of births to females ages 15 to 19 per 1,000 females in this age group). The teen birth rate is used to control for differences in population size of the cities. Cities are ranked on this measure and patterns are noted. Third, we explore changes in teen births among these cities between 1991 and 1996 based on the teen birth rate. This analysis also explores how the racial and ethnic composition of a city may be related to some of the differences in adolescent fertility across the 50 cities and how it has changed over time.

Measuring changes in births to teens

Table 1 shows the number of teen births in 1991 and 1996, and the percentage change between those two years for each of the 50 largest cities. The figures reveal that collectively in the 50 cities, the number of births decreased by 13 percent compared to a 5 percent decline nationally during this period. Our analysis also shows that in 41 of the 50 cities the actual number of births to teens declined between 1991 and 1996. And, in 37 of the 50 cities, the number of births to teens ages 15-19 declined more rapidly than in the nation as a whole. Among the most heartening findings was the extraordinary reduction in teen births in some cities. For example, between 1991 and 1996 the number of births to teens decreased by 39 percent in Detroit, 32 percent in Toledo and St. Louis, and 31 percent in Washington, DC.

In a small number of cities, however, the number of births to teens increased during this period. For example, the births to teens increased by 16 percent in Phoenix, 8 percent in Austin, and 6 percent in Tucson, San Antonio, and Albuquerque.

It is important to recognize that looking only at changes in the number of births does not tell the whole story. Readers may note that cities where the number of births to teens has declined the most are ones which have generally been losing population in recent years and many of the cities where the number of births have increased are cities that have generally been gaining population. Therefore, in the cities where the number of teen births has been increasing it is unclear whether this is due to an increase in the rate at which teens are having babies or an increase in the number of teens.

Looking only at the number of births to teens, or changes in the number of births to teens, does not take into account differences in population size across these cities or changes in the

number of teenagers in these cities between 1991 and 1996. If the number of teenagers is decreasing, one would also expect the number of births to teenagers to decline.

Unfortunately, there are no existing nationwide standardized estimates of the number of 15- to 19-year-old females in each city in 1991 and 1996 which would allow us to calculate traditional teen birth rates. However, by creating a set of estimates of the number of 15- to 19-year-old females in each of these cities in 1991 and 1996, we were able to convert the number of births to teen birth rates which allows more meaningful comparisons across cities and over time.

The Census Bureau provides figures for 11 of the 50 cities for the number of 15- to 19-year-old females in 1991 and 1996 through a regular series of population estimates. Where those Census Bureau estimates existed, they were used to calculate a teen birth rate. For the remaining 39 cities, we estimated the number of 15- to 19-year-old females by calculating the percentage of the total city population that were 15- to 19-year-old females in 1990 and multiplied this percentage times the total city population in 1991 and 1996. Nationally, this percentage changed very little between 1990 and 1996. Moreover, we tested this methodology by using it to estimate the number of 15- to 19-year-old females in the 11 cities where the Census Bureau actually produced estimates, then comparing the results of our method to the estimates from the Census Bureau. The results were very close in nearly every case. Therefore, we feel confident that our teen birth rate figures for 1991 and 1996 are fairly reliable.

Teen birth rates in 1996

Table 2 shows the cities ranked by the teen birth rate in 1996. The table indicates dramatic differences across cities in terms of teen childbearing. The figures range from a low of

31 teen births per 1,000 females ages 15 to 19 in Honolulu, to a high of 199 in Miami. Miami really stands out because it is more than 50 percent higher than the next highest city (Sacramento with a rate of 123). Moreover, examination of data in the first column of Table 4 suggests that the rates for Honolulu and Miami are not due to unusual circumstances or random fluctuations that happened to occur in 1996. Honolulu had the lowest teen birth rate and Miami had the highest rate in 1991 as well.

Some of the differences among the cities are not surprising when one looks at the racial composition of these cities relative to nationwide teen birth rates for major racial/ethnic groups (see Table 3). Several cities with relatively low teen birth rates are cities with relatively large Asian-American populations. For example, in 1990, the three cities with the lowest teen birth rates (Honolulu, Seattle, and San Francisco) had relatively large Asian-American populations according to the 1990 Census. Specifically, 37 percent of children in San Francisco, 70 percent of children in Honolulu, and 17 percent of children in Seattle were Asian/Pacific Islander kids, compared to only 3 percent nationwide. Data in Table 3 indicate that Asian/Pacific Islander teens have very low birth rates; about half the rate of whites. Given recent immigration patterns it would not be surprising if the number of Asian/Pacific Islander teens in San Francisco, Seattle, and Honolulu actually increased from what was seen in 1990.

On the other hand, several cities with high teen birth rates -- for example, Miami, Fresno, and Sacramento -- have relatively large Hispanic populations. The 1990 Census shows that the share of children who were Hispanic was 50 percent in Miami, 22 percent in Sacramento, and 37 percent in Fresno -- all above the national average. Figures shown in Table 3 indicate that Hispanics had the highest teen birth rate of any major racial/ethnic group in 1996. Given

recent immigration patterns it would not be surprising if the number of Hispanic teens in Miami, Sacramento, and Fresno actually increased from what was seen in 1990. Moreover, a significant share of Hispanics in these cities are recent immigrants or children of recent immigrants who are likely to be influenced by the fertility norms of their home country. In Mexico and most other countries of Central and South America the teen birth rate is higher than it is in the United States. For example, the 1996 United Nations Demographic Yearbook[4] shows the teen birth rate for Mexico is nearly 50 percent higher than that in the United States.

While using the national rates as background might make some of the differences among cities more understandable, it is far from a full explanation of the differences across the cities. Cities with very similar racial compositions often had quite different rates. We focus on race/ethnicity here because these figures are readily available and they have a degree of predictive power. Other potential explanatory factors, such as local investments in pregnancy prevention programs or educational opportunities, are difficult to obtain consistently for all cities. Collectively, the racial/ethnic composition of the cities explains about half of the differences seen here in 1996. Which means we must look for other factors and attributes to explain the other half. More importantly, we encourage our readers to compare and contrast this information with data sources that report on established antecedents for teen childbearing, such as poverty rates and access to a good education,[5] to avoid reaching conclusions that are too narrowly defined by race and ethnicity. The racial figures take meaning largely because they reflect shared experiences, access to opportunities, and other social realities that link race to behavior.

We are far from having a complete understanding of why teens have children, but research has identified four conditions that are associated with teenage childbearing.[6] Teens most

likely to have a child are those: 1) from economically disadvantaged families and communities; 2) not doing well in school and having low aspirations for their own educational achievement; 3) from dysfunctional families; and 4) with substance abuse and behavioral problems. Since many of these factors are more prevalent in minority communities it is not surprising that these groups have higher teen birth rates.

Changes between 1991 and 1996

Table 4 shows cities ranked by change in the teen birth rate between 1991 and 1996. Detroit had the largest decrease at 38 percent, followed by Toledo at 30 percent, San Francisco and St. Louis at 29 percent, and New Orleans at 28 percent.

In many cases, the racial composition of a city seems to be related to the teen birth rate in ways that make sense given the nationwide shifts between 1991 and 1996. The overall decline of 13 percent in the teen birth rate between 1991 and 1996 masks important racial differences.

Nationally between 1991 and 1996, the black teen birth rate fell by 22 percent, so it would follow that many cities with large black populations, such as Detroit (81 percent), New Orleans (76 percent), and St. Louis (62 percent) were among the cities that experienced the largest decreases in teen childbearing. Immediately, however, exceptions surface. Blacks comprise a relatively small percent of the San Francisco population (16 percent). Moreover, several cities with large African-American populations, such as Milwaukee (45 percent) and Memphis (69 percent), had very modest declines in their teen birth rate.

Similarly, the Hispanic teen birth rate fell only by 5 percent between 1991 and 1996, so one would expect that many cities with large Hispanic populations did not experience a large

decline in teen births. Phoenix showed no change in the teen birth rate, while the teen birth rate in Portland (OR) and Albuquerque decreased by only 1 percent. In addition to Phoenix and Albuquerque, several of the other cities experiencing little decline, such as Tucson (-2 percent), Fort Worth (-3 percent), Austin (-3 percent), and San Antonio (-3 percent) had large Hispanic populations.

But before one concludes that all cities with large Hispanic populations showed little decline in teen births between 1991 and 1996, it is important to note that several cities with relatively large Hispanic populations, such as Los Angeles (55 percent), San Diego (31 percent), and San Jose (35 percent), experienced significant decreases in their teen birth rates between 1991 and 1996.

CONCLUSIONS

While large urban centers have often been seen as the least promising places for positive change regarding our country's young people, the data provided here show that big cities have been leading the national reduction in teenage childbearing. The results of this cursory analysis provide clear and convincing evidence that our nation's cities may have vital information about what is working and why.

Table 1. Number of teen births in the 50 largest cities and the United States, 1991 and 1996.

Cities ranked by percent change

Rank	City	Number of Births		Percent Change
		1991	1996	1991 to 1996
	United States	519,577	491,577	-5%
	All Cities Collectively	124,605	109,007	-13%
1	Detroit, MI	5,425	3,315	-39%
2	Toledo, OH	1,179	799	-32%
2	St. Louis, MO	1,833	1,244	-32%
4	Washington, DC	1,949	1,354	-31%
5	San Francisco, CA	807	589	-27%
6	Boston, MA	1,083	801	-26%
7	Oakland, CA	1,139	856	-25%
8	Cincinnati, OH	1,428	1,094	-23%
8	New Orleans, LA	2,011	1,544	-23%
8	Los Angeles, CA	11,459	8,842	-23%
11	Pittsburgh, PA	801	635	-21%
12	Long Beach, CA	1,446	1,168	-19%
12	Baltimore, MD	2,736	2,212	-19%
14	Seattle, WA	563	459	-18%
14	Philadelphia, PA	4,886	4,000	-18%
16	Buffalo, NY	1,053	870	-17%
16	San Diego, CA	2,448	2,023	-17%
16	Cleveland, OH	2,237	1,861	-17%
19	Chicago, IL	11,093	9,418	-15%
19	Miami, FL	2,556	2,174	-15%
19	Sacramento, CA	1,720	1,463	-15%
19	Atlanta, GA	1,792	1,527	-15%
23	Honolulu, HI	421	365	-13%
23	San Jose, CA	1,791	1,555	-13%
25	Indianapolis, IN	2,298	2,016	-12%
25	Jacksonville, FL	1,850	1,636	-12%
27	Kansas City, MO	1,307	1,159	-11%
27	Minneapolis, MN	901	803	-11%
29	Milwaukee, WI	2,529	2,288	-10%
30	Oklahoma City, OK	1,337	1,210	-9%
30	Tulsa, OK	1,051	961	-9%
32	Virginia Beach, VA	657	603	-8%
32	Columbus, OH	1,695	1,556	-8%
32	Memphis, TN	2,472	2,276	-8%
35	Charlotte, NC	1,022	951	-7%
35	New York, NY	13,603	12,713	-7%
37	Nashville-Davidson, TN	1,288	1,210	-6%
38	Fresno, CA	1,757	1,714	-2%
38	Dallas, TX	3,790	3,698	-2%
38	Omaha, NE	706	691	-2%
38	Houston, TX	6,422	6,295	-2%
42	El Paso, TX	2,141	2,144	0%
43	Denver, CO	1,396	1,404	1%
43	Portland, OR	857	866	1%
45	Fort Worth, TX	1,529	1,556	2%
46	Albuquerque, NM	1,026	1,083	6%
46	San Antonio, TX	3,323	3,520	6%
46	Tucson, AZ	1,277	1,358	6%
49	Austin, TX	1,269	1,367	8%
50	Phoenix, AZ	3,246	3,761	16%

Source: See Data Sources Note following Table 4.

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Table 2. Teen birth rate (births per 1,000 females ages 15-19) in the 50 largest cities and the United States, 1996.

Cities ranked by teen birth rate

Rank	City	Teen Birth Rate 1996
	United States	54
	All 50 Cities Collectively	78
1	Honolulu, HI	31
2	Seattle, WA	34
3	San Francisco, CA	35
4	Boston, MA	38
5	Virginia Beach, VA	45
6	Pittsburgh, PA	48
7	San Diego, CA	51
8	San Jose, CA	54
9	Omaha, NE	57
9	New York, NY	57
11	Austin, TX	64
12	Columbus, OH	66
12	Portland, OR	66
14	Toledo, OH	67
15	Charlotte, NC	68
16	Jacksonville, FL	69
16	Nashville-Davidson, TN	69
18	Los Angeles, CA	73
18	New Orleans, LA	73
20	Oakland, CA	75
21	Albuquerque, NM	77
21	El Paso, TX	77
21	Minneapolis, MN	77
21	Tulsa, OK	77
25	Detroit, MI	78
25	Oklahoma City, OK	78
25	Tucson, AZ	78
28	Buffalo, NY	79
28	Indianapolis, IN	79
30	Kansas City, MO	82
31	Philadelphia, PA	84
31	San Antonio, TX	84
33	Long Beach, CA	90
34	Cincinnati, OH	91
35	Fort Worth, TX	95
36	Phoenix, AZ	96
37	Chicago, IL	98
38	Baltimore, MD	100
38	Atlanta, GA	100
40	Memphis, TN	103
40	Houston, TX	103
40	Washington, DC	103
43	Denver, CO	104
43	St. Louis, MO	104
45	Milwaukee, WI	107
46	Dallas, TX	109
47	Cleveland, OH	110
48	Fresno, CA	120
49	Sacramento, CA	123
50	Miami, FL	199

Source: See Data Sources Note following Table 4.

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Table 3. Teen birth rates (births per 1,000 females ages 15-19) in 1991 and 1996 by race/ethnicity.

Race/Ethnicity	Teen Birth Rates		Percent Change 1991 - 1996
	1991	1996	
Total	62	54	-13
White	53	48	- 9
Non-Hispanic White	43	38	-12
Black	116	91	-22
American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut	85	74	-13
Asian and Pacific Islander	27	25	-7
Hispanic	107	102	-5

Source: Ventura, S.J., Mathews, T.J., Curtin, S.C. "Declines in Teenage Birth Rates, 1991-1997: National and State Patterns." National Vital Statistics Reports: Vol. 47, No. 12, Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics, 1998-Table 2.

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Table 4. Teen birth rate (births per 1,000 females ages 15-19) in the 50 largest cities and the United States, 1991 and 1996.

Cities ranked by percent change

Rank	City	Birth Rate		Percent Change
		1991	1996	1991 to 1996
	United States	62	54	-13
	All 50 Cities Collectively	91	78	-14
1	Detroit, MI	125	78	-38
2	Toledo, OH	95	67	-30
3	St. Louis, MO	146	104	-29
3	San Francisco, CA	49	35	-29
5	New Orleans, LA	101	73	-28
6	Boston, MA	51	38	-26
7	Los Angeles, CA	96	73	-24
7	Oakland, CA	98	75	-24
9	Honolulu, HI	40	31	-21
10	San Diego, CA	63	51	-20
10	Seattle, WA	43	34	-20
10	Cincinnati, OH	114	91	-20
13	San Jose, CA	67	54	-19
14	Jacksonville, FL	84	69	-18
15	Pittsburgh, PA	58	48	-17
15	Long Beach, CA	108	90	-17
17	Atlanta, GA	120	100	-16
17	Miami, FL	238	199	-16
17	Cleveland, OH	131	110	-16
20	Virginia Beach, VA	53	45	-15
20	Sacramento, CA	144	123	-15
22	Indianapolis, IN	92	79	-14
22	Buffalo, NY	91	79	-14
22	Baltimore, MD	116	100	-14
22	Oklahoma City, OK	91	78	-14
26	Chicago, IL	113	98	-13
26	Philadelphia, PA	97	84	-13
26	Kansas City, MO	94	82	-13
29	Nashville-Davidson, TN	78	69	-11
29	Charlotte, NC	76	68	-11
29	Washington, DC	116	103	-11
29	El Paso, TX	86	77	-11
33	Columbus, OH	74	66	-10
33	Tulsa, OK	85	77	-10
35	Fresno, CA	133	120	-9
35	Minneapolis, MN	85	77	-9
37	New York, NY	61	57	-7
37	Omaha, NE	61	57	-7
39	Houston, TX	110	103	-6
40	Memphis, TN	108	103	-5
40	Dallas, TX	115	109	-5
40	Milwaukee, WI	112	107	-5
43	Denver, CO	108	104	-4
44	San Antonio, TX	87	84	-3
44	Austin, TX	66	64	-3
44	Fort Worth, TX	98	95	-3
47	Tucson, AZ	79	78	-2
48	Albuquerque, NM	78	77	-1
48	Portland, OR	67	66	-1
50	Phoenix, AZ	96	96	0

Source: See Data Sources Note following Table 4.

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DATA SOURCES

Sources for Tables 1, 2, and 4

City Birth Data:

1996: National Center for Health Statistics, "Births by age of mother, 50 largest cities, United States, 1996. Special tabulation by Division of Vital Statistics, 1998."

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City Population Data:

1996: U.S. Bureau of the Census (online) available at:
http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/metro-city/sc100k96.

1991: U.S. Bureau of the Census (online) available at:
http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/metro-city/scts96.

National Population Data:

U.S. Bureau of the Census (online) available at:
http://www.census.gov/population/estimates/nation/popclockest.txt.

ENDNOTES

1. For one free copy of When Teens Have Sex: Issues and Trends, call the Annie E. Casey Foundation publication line at 410-223-2890, or write to the Foundation at 701 St. Paul Street, Baltimore, MD 21202.

2. The cities selected for analysis are the largest 50 cities in terms of population as of 1996 based on Census Bureau estimates.

3. Maynard, Rebecca A., Editor, Kids Having Kids: Economic Costs and Social Consequences of Teen Pregnancy, The Urban Institute Press, Washington, DC, 1997; Luker, Kristin, Dubious Conceptions: The Politics of Teenage Pregnancy, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 1996; The Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1994, Sex and American Teenagers, New York, NY.

4. United Nations, 1998, 1996 Demographic Yearbook, United Nations, New York. Table 11.

5. Kirby, Doug, 1997, No Easy Answers: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, Washington, DC.

6. Moore, Kristin, Brent C. Miller, Barbara W. Sugland, Donna Ruane Morrison, Dana Glei, and Connie Blumenthal, 1995, Beginning Too Soon: Adolescent Sexual Behavior, Pregnancy, and Parenthood, Child Trends, Inc., Washington, DC.

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